Glimpses of Mahayana

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

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NOTE: This book is based on the seminar entitled, "The Complete Teachings of Mahayana," given at Karme-Chöling, Barnet, Vermont, March 29-April 4, 1973.

In changing the title our intention was to place this book in the context of Vidyadhara Trungpa Rinpoche's "Glimpses of" series: *Glimpses of Abhidharma, Glimpses of Shunyata, Glimpses of Space,* and now, *Glimpses of Mahayana.* The original title, "The Complete Teachings of Mahayana," did not refer to the complete coverage of all mahayana topics in one seminar, but rather to the quality of mahayana teachings as full and complete.

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BAD NEWS AND GOOD NEWS

The subject of this book is *mahayana* Buddhism. It is about spirituality as a discipline and how we can exercise that discipline in day-to-day life. We are not purely discussing religious theory, we are talking about actual experience. I would like to make that quite clear. It is a spiritual approach rather than a religious one. Ego, or confused neurosis, always tends to find new crutches to support its own existence. So taking up particular religious ideas might only serve to enrich that tendency to prop up the self-existence of ego.

Both the *hinayana* and the mahayana[1] are processes of cutting through that basic tendency of ego, which is called spiritual materialism. Although different techniques might be involved, the basic approach is the same. It is not based on becoming higher, greater, or better persons, but on finding tendencies of awake that exist within us. It is an uncovering process rather than expanding out. At the same time, there are differences between the hinayana and the mahayana. We need some kind of footing as to those differences, to make the basic pattern clear.

In the hinayana, we work with the basic characteristics of neurosis as a way of cutting down the unnecessary chaos that arises from ego's mentality. It is a cutting down process. The hinayana could be called narrow-minded, in that it does not make any allowance for entertainment or therapy. It is direct, definite, stubborn. No therapy and no entertainment in the ego-oriented style is permitted at all.

Hinayana presents the narrow path in order to develop an understanding of the open path, or open way, of mahayana. The narrow path is to experience that life is pain: it is dwelling in pain and growing up in pain. The whole process of life is wrapped up in pain because the basic tendency of ego is to yearn so much towards pleasure. We try to ward off pain and the notion of pain. However, by doing so and by yearning towards pleasure, the notion of pain gets a lot of attention. Consequently our pain is increased, because it is being teased and fiddled with so much. It's like scratching a wound—by doing so we only get it more infected. The hinayana way is to realize that situation. We accept the fact that we have a wound, but we don't have to scratch it even if it itches. Instead we relate with our wound. We accept that we have a wound: it is part of our bodily chaos and irritation. Hinayana is about accepting that life situation.

Without the hinayana, without a good foundation, we can't build the fortress of mahayana. It is important to know that life is so much to the point. On the one hand, we might say that life is very complicated and chaotic. It's difficult to keep up with all the problems we go through. On the other hand, life is extremely simple. It can be simplified into one phrase: ego pain. Existence is based on the continual birth and death of pain—and ego tries to make that process continuous and to hang onto it. Unless we realize the narrowness of life—narrow in this case meaning that we can't escape from those two basic things, ego and pain—we can't develop the greater vision of mahayana, the great vehicle, at all. We have to start from one atom, one basic point, which acts as a catalyst for the larger world.

Someone told me that ten years ago he had read a book on Buddhism and found it extremely depressing. He said to himself, "Who wants to get into this?" Instead he joined a love-and-light path. However, he found himself asking that same question again later, which brought him back to the basic meaning of pain. Sooner or later we have to realize that life is very simple, extremely simple.

Life consists of the notion of escape, or trying to avoid pain, and the notion of giving one's existence an identity, or trying to increase ego. In order to understand mahayana and its ideals, we have to understand that matter-of-fact situation.

Mahayana is the inspiration of the open way of allegiance to buddha, or awake. You associate yourself with buddha; that is the mahayana way. Hinayana is allegiance to *samsara*, associating yourself with samsara and relating with the samsaric process, which is called renunciation. In other words, buddha cannot exist without samsara; *nirvana* cannot exist without samsara; awake cannot exist without asleep.

At the beginning we have to realize the meaning of life, which consists of erroneous beliefs of all kinds. That is what led us to this point and to our search for the teachings—which could be an erroneous belief, as well. We are here because we made lots of mistakes, piles and piles of mistakes. That we happen to be here discussing this matter together is a result of such mistakes. Whether it is the right mistake or the wrong mistake; it is still an accident that happens to be bringing us together in this life, discussing the whole question of spirituality.

Spirituality is experiencing the narrowness of life. We no longer have any areas to escape to or areas to improvise. It's like birth: we can only come out of one channel from our mother's womb, there's no way of improvising. Having realized that situation fully and completely, having worked on the discipline of relating with pain, impermanence, and suffering; then we might have a *new* area to explore, which is that life is not as grim as it seems. There are sparks of light happening here and there, sparks of intelligence. For the very reason that we are agitated by our life, there is a spark of intelligence. There is hope—the hope for enlightenment. The reason we are dissatisfied with our life is that the message of mahayana is coming through.

In traditional language, that spark of intelligence is referred to as *bodhichitta*, which means "awakened heart," "the heart of enlighten-

ment." Bodhichitta is always there. Because of that heart of enlightenment, instead of constantly cutting ourselves down and condemning ourselves, or purely seeing the negative aspects of life, we come to another conclusion, which is that we are already awake. We have within us *tathagatagarbha*, which means "the essence or seed of enlightened mind," or "buddha mind." That is the good news. But it seems that you cannot create good news without bad news to begin with. So the hinayana approach deliberately creates the bad news: that we are trapped, we are hopeless, we are helpless, and the meaning of life is pain.

The mahayana approach, the good news, is that even if life is pain and you are trapped in samsaric imprisonment—how do you *know* that? If you know that, if you have some notion of *discovering* that, maybe there is something in you that is actually able to see that—which is *good* news. From that point of view, hinayana and mahayana are reciprocal. The mahayana is based on a sense of self-respect, openness, and hope. The hinayana is based on a sense of hopelessness, narrowness, that there is no other way, no alternative. That is equally important, extremely important.

This notion of buddha nature, *embryonic* enlightenment, is one of the dominant inspirations of the mahayana. It is embryonic because it is still looked at with suspicion—it may not happen. It is still conditioned by the hope of becoming solid or getting into some solid situation. Buddha nature is also very *pragmatic*. In order to acknowledge such an embryonic situation, you have to work on it and awaken it. Contemplating or theorizing alone doesn't help—it takes a tremendous energy boost to exercise the buddha nature as if you had already awoken.

Although you may be half asleep, you still have to wake up and acknowledge your buddha nature as if you were completely awake. That is trusting in the heart. You believe that you could relate with yourself and your potentialities in spite of your imprisonment in samsara. You could still make love to yourself. You could love yourself and

appreciate yourself because those two situations do exist in you. One of the basic principles or foundations of mahayana is that life is workable after all, it can be handled. But a certain amount of warmth and sympathy is necessary—toward yourself to begin with. And again, in order to develop the mahayana, it is necessary to begin first with the hinayana.

DISCUSSION

SEED OF ENLIGHTENMENT

STUDENT: Is the seed of enlightenment you spoke of always alive in us or can it perish?

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: As long as there is a question about the subject, it can't have perished. Acknowledging the restlessness of life is the seed. Seeking pleasure and warding off pain is the seed. In other words, unless you are a robot or a jellyfish, something is happening, which is the seed. Even a jellyfish might have buddha nature.

RENUNCIATION

S: Rinpoche, you spoke of hinayana as being the way of renunciation, and renunciation as being the way of relating to samsara. Could you say more about that?

CTR. Renunciation is completely relating with the fact that you are trapped in an extremely strong prison. The only way of dealing with that situation is not to try to get out, but to try to make yourself at home communicating with the things that caught you. It is like having a net around you. The whole thing is very narrow. Escape is not possible; therefore a better, more pleasurable situation is not possible. Renunciation is accepting that you have only one or two situations to work on. There are no other areas that you can dream up—and even if you dream, your dream is cut down. Renunciation means realizing the nuisance of yourself.

NARROWNESS AND OPENNESS

S: In our daily life it's possible to experience both narrowness and openness. What does one do?
CTR: The first step is to acknowledge the narrowness. Then, having acknowledged that, you have to take some kind of leap to bring that realization to a functional level. That is to say, first you feel the narrowness, the imprisonment. You feel that there is no alternative in life, that life has only one track, which is suffering and ego. Then, realizing that, you dance on that one track. So that one track isn't purely further depression, but it is further excitement as well, because you have no alternatives to play around with.
S: But what if you experience both states at the same time? Do you dance with both of them?
CTR: Sure. I think that's possible.
S: That becomes quite a confused space.
CTR: Then explore the confusion, which is also a dance.

IDIOT COMPASSION

S: You said something about compassion toward ourselves. How much compassion should we have toward ourselves? Are we too harsh with ourselves?
CTR: Generally, we are too *compassionate* with ourselves. We constantly seek pleasure, so we try to be overly kind to ourselves and delude ourselves. We try to shield ourselves from our mistakes as if nothing happened. The hinayana way begins with the realization that everything is very serious, that you have no alternatives. In your attempt to be too kind to yourself, you have trapped yourself in your idiot compassion which creates further pain.

If you become more familiar with that pattern and realize the alternativelessness, then you could become more compassionate. I think that is why hinayana is important at the beginning—to realize that you can't just treat yourself as if you were what you would like to be.

To begin with, you have to cut down your indulgence. You have to realize that if you indulge yourself, that only creates further pain. That realization itself is hopeful. It brings more encouragement. Compassion does not mean creating pleasure, but rather creating a sense of trust in yourself and not condemning. This kind of compassion can be developed if you have the relative intention to do so.

INDULGENCE

S: Isn't it indulgent to try to improve your situation at all, to move geographically or try to get a better job? If you give up alternatives, do you simply stick with the boredom of your current situation?
CTR: Changing jobs doesn't have anything to do with it. Moving from an armchair to the sofa, which is more comfortable, or drinking tea instead of coffee—those don't have anything to do with the larger situation. In talking about indulgence, I don't mean that you have to punish yourself constantly. Changing your physical situation doesn't make any difference. Indulgence is the general attitude of wanting to achieve a state of solid pleasure. That is the basic point. It is a psychological issue, a question of trying to secure your being.
S: There might be a point where you need to make a choice.
CTR: Choice is related to the present situation. You have only one situation at a time; you cannot have two situations happening simultaneously. You have the present situation and you have a possibility. When you make a choice, you start with the present situation rather than the possibility of some hypothetical situation that hasn't yet materialized. That seems to be the point of having ground.

LOVING ONESELF

S: By loving oneself more, do you mean not judging yourself for being in samsara, for being pleasure seeking or involved in ego pain, but just accepting that that's where you are?
CTR: That seems to be the point. Loving oneself means accepting both

the positive and the negative, whatever there is. It is not only loving, but also regarding the whole thing as fertile ground, as a workable situation—like a field with manure on it.

TRUST IN THE HEART

S: You talked about trust in the heart providing the energy that stirs you towards enlightenment. That is confusing because what we experience is so totally dependent on the confusion of our moods, on insubstantial stuff. I don't really know how to get to the heart. It seems to suggest a ground.

CTR: It does suggest a ground, but the ground doesn't have to be flat ground. The ground could be the current that flows through, the ocean as ground as opposed to the land as ground. The ocean goes up and down, but it is still ground. Likewise, dissatisfactions could be regarded as ground. It's a question of whether you are relating with the situation as workable or whether you are taking advantage of frivolity. Even frivolity could be related to as ground, somewhat, but you shouldn't be possessed by it because in frivolity you are no longer experiencing the seriousness of the pain. Frivolity does not relate with anything except its own irony or foolishness. It is a mask. By relating with it you might crush the mask. That seems to be the only way to relate with it.

You can't really start with an ideal situation. In fact, as a product of discriminating intelligence, which compares grounds, you may find that the present ground is completely insubstantial—but there is still some energy going on that could be worked with. I think you have to allow yourself to have some kind of stepping stone. It may not be as solid as you would like, but it is still a stepping stone.

[1] In this discussion, the terms hinayana and mahayana are referring to stages on the three-yana journey of hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana, rather than to the different schools of Buddhism.

Two

A GOLDEN BUDDHA

In the mahayana, inspiration comes from experiencing the spark of intelligence or enlightenment in us. Discovering that potential is one of the fundamental characteristics of the mahayana. Having looked into our feelings of inadequacy, pain and confusion; we see them as neither good nor bad, but as *workable*. In our day-to-day life, we find that the search for pleasure, either materialistic or spiritual, is unconvincing. Behind that whole approach is a sense of dissatisfaction and continual struggle. Recognizing that dissatisfaction and struggle is the discovery of the first noble truth, the truth of suffering, or *duhkha*. However, that discovery of the universality of pain is the discovery of buddha nature as well. That realization is not stupid or ignorant, but intelligent. So the struggle we go through is an expression of enlightened mind. The bad news in itself is good news.

The enlightenment potential, or buddha nature, has two components: fundamental intelligence and basic warmth. Fundamental intelligence, or discriminating awareness, allows us to look at situations in life critically—hopefully even to the point of searching for spirituality, the ultimate goal. Basic warmth means that even though we may condemn ourselves as bad, weak, or confused; by its very nature, such condemnation is an expression of warmth, strangely enough. By looking at ourselves critically we expect something good will come of it, so there is a sense of ambition. Condemning ourselves is the ultimate hope, in fact.

Such virtues may be entirely spiritually materialistic or psychologically materialistic. Nevertheless, the driving force behind them, the very existence of such potential, is the buddha nature operating. At the same time, that potential is entirely dependent on the realization of pain. We start from that. So pain becomes a kind of crutch or stepping stone to buddha nature. But at this point, buddha nature is still embryonic or potential. It is embryonic because it is a *glimpse* of hope rather than an actual experience of complete hope.

The great teacher Taranatha talks about the embryonic awakened state of mind being solid, eternal, permanent. His approach is challenged by others, who say that is not the experience of real buddha nature but of ultimate ego. They say that it is precisely the function of ego—to be ambitious, to strive towards achievement, and to try to associate with what is solid, positive, and hopeful.

On the one hand, it is true that buddha nature could be regarded as ego. Enlightened mind becomes ego because a sense of security is imposed on it, a feeling that we will live forever. Ego is all those attitudes that are imposed on buddha nature. Buddha nature, or basic sanity, is exploited and used as backing to reassure us of our existence. Buddha nature is used to reassure us that we are secure and healthy, that we will never experience death. On the other hand, if there is no sense of permanent security, no sense of using buddha nature as a pawn, no sense of maintaining a relationship with simple-minded hope and fear—then buddha nature becomes just simple straightforward buddha nature, or enlightened mind. So, on the whole, buddha nature, the attitude directed toward enlightenment, is very solid, very continuous. It is extremely definite, without any mistakes.

Buddha nature, or tathagatagarbha, has many attributes: it is unborn, unobstructed, and it does not dwell on anything. To begin with, it is continuous and solid because it is unborn. It is not based on or reinforced by something that already exists. Buddha nature does not have to be given birth to by effort or preconception, in the way that

giving birth to a child requires a father and a mother. In this case, parents are synonomous with preconceptions. Buddha mind or enlightened mind is not dependent on such preconceptions; therefore, it is unborn, unoriginated.

Another attribute of buddha nature is that it is unobstructed. Its flow cannot be prevented by any causal characteristics that depend on karmic chain reactions. So it is free from karma. Our intelligence, our restlessness, does not need nursing or securing. It is constantly, intelligently, critical of pain. Our restlessness is unobstructed and does not need to be nursed.

Another attribute of buddha nature is that it does not dwell on anything, which means that we cannot categorize it as being associated with good or bad, pleasure or pain. Enlightened intelligence shines through both pain and pleasure; in other words, through any kind of cognitive mind. So the unconditioned cognitive mind that functions in our basic being is the true enlightened mind. There's nothing very obscure about this. It has nothing to do with mystical experience or anything like that at all. It is functional, simple, direct, intelligent, sane, and pragmatic.

The basic point about buddha nature is that this restless mind is the buddha nature. Because it is so intelligent, therefore it is restless. It is so transparent that we can't put any patch on it to mask over the irritation—if we do, the irritation still comes through. We can't hold the irritation back or maintain ego-style comfort anymore. The purpose of ego is to search for permanent, solid comfort. Even though this search might cost a lot in terms of temporarily sacrificing and inflicting pain on ourselves, we hope that in the end we will finally achieve ultimate comfort or security—but each time we begin to achieve that, something else goes wrong.

In tantric literature, buddha mind is referred to as a lamp in a vase. If a vase is cracked, the imperfections of the vase can be seen because of the light shining through from inside. In mahayana literature, a popular analogy refers to enlightened mind as the sun and ego's security as the clouds that prevent the sun from shining through.

The idea of buddha mind is not purely a concept or a theoretical, metaphysical ideal. It is something extremely real that we can experience ourselves. In fact, it is the ego that feels that we have an ego. It is ego that tells us, "My ego is bothering me. I feel very self-conscious about having to be me. I feel that I have a tremendous burden in me, and I wonder what the best way to get rid of it is." Yet all those expressions of restlessness that keep coming out of us are the expression of buddha nature, the expression of unborn, unobstructed, and nondwelling.

It is said in the *Guhyasamajatantra* that all sentient beings are good vessels for the mahayana teaching, that we can exclude nobody. Therefore, we should take delight and cheer up. Also, in one of his opening speeches, so to speak, the Buddha discussed which vessels are appropriate to receive the teachings, who could be excluded and who could be included. He said, "Let everyone come and join. Invite *everybody!*" This approach of seeing buddha nature as all-pervading is one of the basic threads of tantra as well as of the mahayana. That upsurge of the energy of awakened mind is energy one can use and transmute in the tantric teachings.

In taking the *bodhisattva* vow, we are acknowledging that we have a great many family characteristics of the family of the Buddha. We are acknowledging that potential, or buddha nature. In fact, any kind of ambition we might have in our life, such as trying to maintain or advance ourselves, could be regarded as an expression of enlightened mind. It has been said that even the most vicious animals have the instinct to take care of their young and be loving to them, which is an expression of buddha nature.

When people have a glimpse of buddha nature, it is not a glimpse in the sense of viewing something: it is a gap rather than a glimpse. That gap is the experience that comes out of seeing through the veils of ego. But whether we have a glimpse of it or not, the buddha mind is still functioning in us all the time. It occurs in the most bizarre,

cheap, and confused styles we might present, as well as in whatever extremely profound, dignified and wise experiences we might have. All of those are the expressions of buddha nature.

One of the foundations of the mahayana approach to life is the realization that completely perfect enlightenment, *samyaksambuddha,* is no longer a myth—it is real. For the hinayanist, enlightenment is pure myth. First one has to attain the *arhat* stage, which is a stage of absorption, and from there one has to advance to the enlightened attitude. But in the mahayana approach, as Taranatha puts it, everybody carries in his or her heart a perfectly produced image of the Buddha, beautifully made, cast in gold.

Everybody has such an image in his or her heart. That seems to be true. It's very real, delightfully real—and the unreality makes things *more* real! That is the ground of the great vehicle: before you think big, you have to think real. That seems to be the starting point of the Lion's Roar, the proclamation of mahayana. Mahayana starts with the faith and conviction that nobody is condemned or confused.

DISCUSSION

EGO AND BUDDHA NATURE

STUDENT: Because of our confusion, because we don't understand life, we may sit down to read a book on Buddhism. Are you saying that the impulse to try to find greater clarity or truth that prompts us to pick up the book is enlightened mind coming through?

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Yes. Whether you understand it or not, that very attempt is buddha nature.

S: Then where would the ego come in?

CTR: Ego's approach is the mentality of the lucrative, the profitable: "I should be getting something out of this book, otherwise my effort is wasted." It's an unrealistic, business-like mentality, the idea that if things don't make sense your search is wasted.

S: You said that the ego is buddha nature. Could you also dwell on your ego *without* having buddha nature involved?
CTR: If you are trying to separate them, that is the work of ego. That very project becomes ego's project. The impulse to go forward is buddha nature—any afterthoughts are ego. The first impulse, the first clear driving force, is buddha nature. If you lay an affectation over basic sanity, it becomes neurosis. Whether your attitude is that there is nothing good in ego, that there is no buddha nature, or you try to make things better or more solid, it is still an affectation.
S: What attitude *would* bring forth buddha nature?
CTR: Having *no* attitude, just being simple and straightforward.

TRUST IN THE HEART

S: Can it become dangerous to believe that one has had a glimpse of buddha nature? At what point does trust in the heart become dangerous?
CTR: It could become dangerous if you begin to use it as a credential, as a way of expanding your power either over yourself or others. The same thing applies to any kind of practice. If your practice is just pure, direct practice, that seems to be very simple. But if your practice becomes somewhat heroic, or connected with finding definite proof, it is dangerous.

IMPULSE AND SPONTANEITY

S: Rinpoche, you said that the impulsive afterthought is ego, while the immediate thought is buddha nature. How do you distinguish between impulsiveness and spontaneity?
CTR: To begin with, impulse is not spontaneous. It may *seem* spontaneous, but it doesn't have the relaxed quality of spontaneity. Impulse comes out like a sneeze, as the result of pressure; whereas spontaneity is like yawning, it has less pressure and it takes its time. A glimpse of buddha nature is not violent; whereas impulse is very violent, desperate. Spontaneity is buddha nature, and impulse is ego. Impulse never reaches the first stage; impulse always trails behind. Impulse is never up to date; it is the rebound. First you see, then you react. Impulse never comes first hand, it is a reaction.

CONTINUITY OF BUDDHA NATURE

S: It sounds as though buddha nature is intermittent.
CTR: The restlessness is the sharpest and most immediate situation we experience, whereas buddha nature itself is something we can't catch hold of and put in a container. That is why it is associated with light. Buddha nature is happening constantly, but ego doesn't have a chance to register it. Buddha nature is constantly ahead of you, you being ego at this point. It is constantly ahead of you.
S: So you are continually dissatisfied?
CTR: Yes. The intelligence is always shining through.

BUDDHA NATURE AND GROUNDLESSNESS

S: Could you relate buddha nature with the image of falling, of having no ground at all?
CTR: That seems to be the whole point: buddha nature brings the realization that there is no ground.
S: But it doesn't seem as if you are seeing anything.
CTR: It isn't *seeing*, really, in terms of reporting back to your brain or anything like that. I don't known what word you could use. The usual word for this is *jnana*, or knowing—but you don't even *know*. I suppose we could make a distinction between looking and seeing. You see first; you look afterwards.
S: Could you say that buddha nature sees that there is no ground because it sees the ego coming up over and over again?
CTR: Buddha nature is not regarded as another kind of cognitive mind functioning. It is part of our cognitive mind, but it supercedes cognitive mind. It naturally sees the fruitlessness of struggle—as well as

encouraging struggle in order to prove its fruitlessness. The whole thing is sort of an automatic, inbuilt, natural mechanism which is trying to wear itself out. In other words, without buddha nature, ego cannot exist. Ego is constantly teased by buddha nature into activating itself, so either it is perpetuating itself or wearing itself out.

S: Rinpoche, when you talk about having no ground, it seems to imply that there are no rules about what to do, or about whether what you are doing at a certain moment is good or bad. That seems very confusing. It leaves you hanging on a cliff.

CTR: That seems to be the whole point, that you don't have any reference point to hold onto. And the fear is the fear of losing ego. But losing ego doesn't mean that you wouldn't know how to brush your teeth or make a cup of tea. In fact, you would probably do those things better. However, it is quite fearful, even in theory—and the *experience* is going to be even heavier.

WHY DISCUSS BUDDHA NATURE

S: Why do we have to concern ourselves with this? It seems to happen spontaneously as we go along. If we are practicing and learning and becoming more aware of our groundlessness, why do we have to discuss buddha nature?

CTR: I don't know why, but we find ourselves questioning ourselves. You could ask why we question at all, but that in itself is a question.

BUDDHA NATURE IN AMERICA

S: Rinpoche, if an individual is not into Buddhism, or a spiritual path, if he's a businessman, restless and ambitious to make more money, to make his life better, if he is not aware of ego or of duality—is his restlessness still considered a spark of intelligence, or buddha nature?

CTR: Yes, I think so, in the long run. This seems to have been happening in this country already. Your father, your great-grandfathers, and your great-great-great-grandfathers were all preoccupied with

building a brand new world—so they built it. Then the whole thing turned around, and now we are talking about buddha nature. Without missionaries, or people proselytizing these ideas in this country, the country itself is awakening to this idea of buddha nature. It might take a long time for people to realize their buddha nature, and businessmen might have to freak out. Neverthess, the effort is not wasted, although it might take several lifetimes to come about. In fact, this whole question has come up as a result of that restlessness and as a result of those people putting in their effort.

TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

S: Rinpoche, how about the case of traditional societies that seem to go along their leisured way and don't change very much, societies in which people seem content to do things the way their forefathers did them?

CTR: Generally, you can't have an ideal solid society operating for thousands of years, although I suppose you could say that Tibet was close to it. When I left my country recently, it was still a medieval society, but then a force from the outside thrust us out. Since we didn't make any new discoveries, somebody else made a new discovery for us. We were pushed out. So there can be no such thing as a permanent traditional society as long as people desire to be comfortable and happy. But I suppose the more speed there is, the more buddha nature is coming through. We could say that.

SECURITY AND INSECURITY

S: If we are aware of buddha nature, isn't that a type of security in itself?

CTR: It could go either way. If we are aware that we have a buddha nature, that is security—but we are also aware that we might lose our ego by being involved with buddha nature, and that is not security. Knowing that you cannot witness your own burial is quite uncomfortable.

S: You said that ego tries to use buddha nature to insure its own security.
CTR: Ego tries anything it can lay its hands on.
S: But ego itself is buddha nature, right?
CTR: Yes. That is why it can be used up. Otherwise it would become a war between budda nature and ego.
S: It seems confusing that buddha nature as ego would try to use buddha nature.
CTR: Yes, isn't that absurd?
S: Ego and buddha nature in this case are almost the same. Isn't that a paradox, the notion that buddha nature and ego are interchangeable?
CTR: It is like a healing wound. When your wound is healed, the scab falls away; but at the same time, the scab is part of the wound. The fundamental idea is something like that.

Three

AWAKENING BUDDHA NATURE

In regard to buddha nature, the question seems to be: How can we provoke or awaken that basic potential? Traditionally, the aspiration to develop compassion comes from experiencing the misery and pain that we and our fellow beings are going through; from allegiance toward the spiritual friend; and from a sense of dedication, in that we are not afraid to apply our experience in working with sentient beings.

Buddha nature is not regarded as a peaceful state of mind or, for that matter, as a disturbed one, either. It is a state of intelligence that questions our life and the meaning of life. It is the foundation of a search. A lot of things haven't been answered in our life—and we are still searching for the questions. That questioning is buddha nature. It is a state of potential. The more dissatisfaction, more questions, and more doubts there are, the healthier it is, for we are no longer sucked into ego-oriented situations but we are constantly woken up. We may feel that we are able to relax, let go, and take pleasure out of our life—but that becomes more and more momentary. We are woken up constantly by that unrest. Whether we are in a greater dramatic situation or a smaller petty situation, that same pattern goes on.

The beginning point of buddha nature seems to be the development of *maitri*, which could be translated as "love," "kindness," or "a friendly attitude." Having a friendly attitude means that when you make friends with someone, you accept the neurosis of that friend as well as

the sanity of that friend. You accept both extremes of your friend's basic makeup as resources for friendship. If you make friends with someone because you only like certain parts of that friend, then it is not complete friendship, but partial friendship. So maitri is *all-encompassing* friendship, friendship which relates with the creativity as well as the destructiveness of nature.

Maitri is not only maitri toward others, but it is also maitri toward ourselves. In fact, the first step of awakening buddha nature is friendship with ourselves. This tends to help a great deal. We don't have alternatives or side tracks anymore because we are satisfied with ourselves. We don't try to imitate anyone else because we hate ourselves and we would like to be like somebody else instead. We are on our own ground and we are our own resources. We might be fantasizing that there is a divine force or higher spiritual energy that might save us, but even that depends on our recognition that such a thing exists. Finally we end up just relating with ourselves. So friendship, or maitri, means the complete acceptance of our being.

The agitation of buddha nature coming through, questioning and dissatisfied, at the same time produces all kinds of insightful discoveries. We begin to settle down to our situation—not looking for alternatives at all, but just being with that. So the first step of the process of awakening buddha nature, embryonic enlightened mind, is trust in the heart, trust in ourselves. Such trust can only come about if there is no categorizing, no philosophizing, no moralizing, and no judgments. Instead there is a simple direct relationship with our being.

One reason our being becomes workable is that we are constant people. We are completely, all the time, constant and predictable. We are predictable in the sense that there is a continual upsurge of energy and a continual upsurge of wanting: wanting to change, wanting to grasp, wanting to find out the details of life, wanting to seek pleasure. That happens constantly, and that constant unrest and energy could be regarded as a stepping stone. We could work with that.

We might feel that we go through ups and downs: we feel highly excited and good and then we feel terribly depressed and shaky. But whatever we might be going through, we are still in the same situation all the time. We are constantly questioning, doubting, looking from this angle, looking from that angle, looking from a slight distance or from completely close up. All those games that go on are not regarded as bad, particularly, at all. Rather, they are expressions of our agitated enlightened mind trying to foment a revolution. Our agitated enlightened mind is trying to throw off the seeming expressions of ego. As long as we are able to relate with that as workable—and very real, in fact—then there is tremendous potential in us. We could make friends with ourselves. We could develop maitri.

Having managed to do such a thing, we could begin to relate with others. We could relate with our father and our mother, the people who taught us how to walk, how to talk, how to behave. We could relate with our friends and we could relate with our enemies. We could relate with people who taught us the unpleasantness of life as well as the people who taught us how pleasant life is. We feel that we have inherited so much from the people around us right from childhood.

If we develop friendliness to ourselves, we could extend that friendliness to others—in a sense it is others; nevertheless, it is *us* at the same time. It is a very dubious relationship: it is not exactly the *other* other, but the *seemingly* other, which constantly bounces back on us. So extending to others is predominantly and basically a way of making friends with ourselves. Obviously, our father, mother, brother, sister, friends, and enemies have done their best to relate with us. We have become their product in some sense. But their product, *their* other, means *us* at the same time.

Expanding maitri cuts the neurosis of wishful thinking, the idea that you should be a good person only. Maitri is *intelligent* friendliness that allows acceptance of your whole being. It doesn't exclude friend or enemy, father or mother. It does not matter whether you regard

your father as a friend and your mother as an enemy, your brother as a friend and your sister as an enemy, your friend as a friend, your friend as an enemy, or your enemy as a friend. The whole situation becomes extraordinarily spacious and is suddenly workable. Maybe there is hope after all.

It is tremendously delightful that you could make friends with your parents and yourself, make friends with your enemies and yourself. At the same time, creativity still goes on. Something is beginning to break through. It is actually becoming real rather than imaginary. It is real because we don't have any hypothesis about how a good person should be or how we should improve ourselves. It is no longer hypothetical—it is real. Something actually does exist: relationships exist; love and hate exist. Because they exist; therefore, we are able to work with them as stepping stones.

We begin to feel that we can afford to expand, that we can let go without protecting ourselves. We have developed enough maitri toward ourselves that we are no longer threatened by being open. At that point, we are inspired to spirituality. In this case, the idea of spirituality is nothing religious or sacred; it is purely relating to something beyond ourselves. Spirituality is relating to something beyond the simple level of me and my pen, me and my relatives, me and my friends. It is going slightly beyond that. We can go beyond the limitations of our familiarities. We see that there are further areas to explore. That becomes important—prominent, in fact.

This is the level where we begin to relate with the "spiritual friend," or *kalyanamitra*. In other words, unless the fortifications of home ground have been broken down, we can't relate with the spiritual friend at all. The spiritual friend is somebody else, some other person quite different from our parents, relatives, or friends. He or she is the epitome of a foreigner. The spiritual friend is not our father, not our mother, not our friend. He represents what is outside of home ground—an entirely new area, a new perspective.

At the beginning, the idea of relating with such a person may be rather frightening. We prefer to come back home and relate with our own people, those whom we used to having relationships with. That feels very safe—and this idea seems a bit dubious, uncertain. Nevertheless, there is inspiration; and that inspiration is constantly expanding. The radiation of maitri is still happening, so we can't just keep holding on to incestuous and stagnant relationships, alternating from father to friend, friend to enemy. That becomes a bit too localized, too simplified. Instead, we develop the tendency to explore a greater area. In fact, that is precisely what mahayana means: it is the "great vehicle," encompassing a greater area and a sense of exploration.

At this point an odyssey begins to take place. Although we don't want to, we still can't keep ourselves from relating with the kalyanamitra. We finally begin to make the right mistake; we fall into the right accident. We feel uncomfortable, but at the same time it is so tempting that we *have* to step out of our old realm and get into a new approach, a new perspective. We cannot help it. We feel that we are being very naughty, but we can't help it. We can't help being naughty. Our people, our friends, might say, "Don't talk to those foreigners, we don't know about *them*, they could be dangerous." But we still want to find out more about those foreigners, for the very reason that they think differently, they behave differently, and their style is outlandish and fascinating.

The reason we refer to such a person as a spiritual friend rather than a guru is because the popular idea of a guru is of a person who possesses spiritual power and insight and is omniscient and wise. A guru is someone who has enormous understanding about life in the world and of reality and also has tremendous power and skill. A guru could cause the world to turn against us if we were on the wrong side of that person—in contrast, we ourselves feel embarrassingly small and stupid, undignified and frivolous.

Feeling so small ourselves and being in the presence of such a large situation is so threatening. Even if we have received spiritual

instructions from such a guru, we still feel uncertain as to how to handle that message. We feel so unaccommodating, so poverty stricken that we couldn't possibly digest it. We can't even hold it in our hands. Our vision is so limited, our hearing is so limited, our brains are so small and inadequate, that we feel that we can't do anything. We might try, but it still feels as if nothing is really communicated. It is like a flea trying to study with an elephant and one day trying to become one. That seems to be the wrong notion of guru. That idea of guru is a myth.

The right approach, according to Shantideva, Gampopa, and Buddha, is that a spiritual friend, or kalyanamitra, is much more powerful than a hierarchical guru. A kalyanamitra brings a sense of friendship. The spiritual friend is extending friendship to you as you have done already. You have made friends with yourself; you have prepared yourself to search for a spiritual friend—and you find somebody who is the spokesman of the world outside your home ground. You can work with him and talk to him. He speaks your language. That person is a human being, a full-fledged human being. He needs food to sustain himself, he needs to take a rest at night, he gets up in the day, has breakfast as we do, lunch as we do, dinner as we do, wears clothes and breathes like we do. The spiritual friend is a human being.

One of the attributes of Buddha is that he is referred to as the supreme being amongst men. Literally, the text says, "the supreme being among two negative ones"—which is referring to humans rather than birds. The Buddha is never referred to as a heavenly being outside of this world. He is referred to as the teacher of human beings, a leader of men. He is a man himself—but he is an extraordinary one, a healthy one. Nevertheless, we can still communicate. So the spiritual friend is not a person who undermines our existence and our neurosis, but a person who speaks the same neurotic language we speak. He or she is an extraordinarily adaptable person. It is workable to relate with such a person.

The spiritual friend represents the *dharma*, "the teachings," the message of enlightenment. By judging this particular person we find that enlightenment may not be as far out as we had imagined. This person is a spokesman, soaked in this particular awake state of being himself, yet he speaks and behaves as we do. He has something to teach us, and he seems to be friendly as well—although at the beginning we may still be suspicious. That is the meaning of spiritual friend: you are working with a human being, the son or daughter of a human.

Relating with such a spiritual friend is our first introduction to the realization that our adventure is not a bad one after all. The spiritual friend does not speak our petty domestic language—but in a very strange combination he is able to speak our language while at the same time not being wrapped up in the things that we usually get wrapped up in ourselves. It is a very strange kind of a performance. You could almost call it magic: being a human being and not being caught up in the pettiness. It's an extraordinary thing.

We often wonder whether somebody doing that is an accomplished actor. Maybe it is our own fantasy. Maybe we are seeing somebody we want to see, but it is not actually happening. Those thoughts flicker in our minds naturally. I don't see anything wrong with that at all. Such things are necessary. They give us a break from the heavy-handedness of our spiritual friend. We have a little snack, a little break, an intermission—which is good. We don't expect to be heavy-handed ourselves or transform ourselves completely.

According to the scriptures and my own personal experience, a kalyanamitra, or spiritual friend, is a good person, good and trustworthy; and relating with a spiritual friend is a trustworthy situation. It is trustworthy because whenever there is doubt or fear, the spiritual friend does not try to justify himself, but bounces that back on you to remind you to awaken buddha nature. The spiritual friend is a very powerful mirror—a mirror that can reflect back your own reflection with super clarity to the point of irritation. Even if you try to escape from that

embarrassing encounter, that notion of escape is also recorded. It bounces back on you as well, so you can't get out of it. You find yourself on the path in an encounter with a spiritual friend who will let you escape—but that escape itself becomes another encounter.

The spiritual friend can perform miracles purely by working with the ordinariness of life. It is nothing fabulous or magical, but a question of how much one is involved with the ordinariness of life. You would be surprised how much magic there is if one is being completely ordinary, if one is thoroughly and fully experiencing the highest quality of ordinariness or simplicity of life. While you are taking off into some fantasy, which you think is your ground—when you think that you have your ground already set up—that person who is at the ordinary level pops up. At the beginning you think it is a miracle, that somebody has conjured up chaos. But in fact it is not a miracle in terms of magic; it is a miracle in that self-existing energy has been connected. The spiritual friend is very powerful because he or she has direct access to the ordinariness of life, nothing fanciful.

Relating with the spiritual friend brings us out from our home ground of seemingly domesticated maitri to the level of compassion, or *karuna*. That seems to be the turning point of commitment to the teachings and to the agent of the teachings, who is the spiritual friend. The teaching is not a myth anymore; it is real, livable, workable, and pragmatic. At the same time, the intelligence of our buddha nature begins to function.

DISCUSSION

SITTING PRACTICE AND MAITRI

STUDENT: It seems that sitting practice exercises maitri, that it gives us room. I have been following my breath, sort of shutting out the chaos, but I'm a little confused about this.

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Shutting out chaos is necessary at the beginning. Then, when you let go of the technique, you find that you have more space than you imagined. So the technique creates a situation, rather than the technique being valid in itself. It is like dropping your crutches—you begin to bounce. The idea of technique is to accentuate whatever comes afterwards.

MAITRI AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

S: How does one develop maitri and really accept oneself?

CTR: When you talk about *how* to do it, you are asking for a technique that won't bring you into an uncomfortable situation but at the same time will achieve what you want to achieve. Instead of using your hands, you want to use some machine, a pair of pliers or gloves. You are not willing to relate with things directly. So it seems that there is no *how* to do it, you have to *push* yourself. If you are pushed into the water it may create a situation of panic—but, at the same time, you automatically swim.

S: How does one relate to the spiritual friend when one cannot accept friendship with oneself or one's family?

CTR: The relationship with the spiritual friend demands a relationship with yourself, so it works two ways at once. You have to learn to relate with yourself, because the spiritual friend is trying to make sure that you have no other choice. The heavy-handedness of the spiritual friend is also bouncing back a mirror reflection on you, so you are also your friend, as well as the spiritual friend being your friend. Also, if you have a relationship with a spiritual friend, that automatically

means that you have done some work already; otherwise you wouldn't look for such a person at all. That must mean there's something going on inside you.

BUDDHA NATURE AND SEARCHING

S: You said that buddha nature is not a peaceful state, that it's still searching for questions. That kind of confused me.

CTR: In describing buddha nature, I used the analogy of a revolutionary who is trying to throw off the expressions of ego. So ego is still there, of course. A revolutionary might act as if there's no authority, but he still has to fight with the authorities. As long as buddha nature is "nature," or *garbha,* it has to try to break out. The function of buddha nature is breaking out of the shell.

Buddha nature has cognitive mind, because it is "nature," it is imprisoned within boundaries. So cognitive mind is buddha nature. In other words, you cannot have a revolution in a country if there is no suppressor. Suppression and revolution work together as an integral situation. It is like Mao Tse-tung's theory that you have to have a cultural revolution repeating every ten years or so to make sure that things are refreshed. Without any person to attack, you can't renew your revolution. This is an interesting point of tension, that an upsurge needs suppression. That's exactly the job of buddha nature, seemingly.

TRANSCENDING STRUGGLE

S: Does the bodhisattva transcend the whole struggle of samsara and nirvana?

CTR: There are ten stages of the bodhisattva path, and each stage is a struggle, so I don't think the bodhisattva transcends struggle. You can't get rid of struggle at the start, you need struggle; otherwise there's no journey.

Four

SUDDEN GLIMPSE

The whole approach of loving kindness, or maitri, is one of expanding. We are taking steps outward instead of internalizing or developing maitri in ourselves alone. This is a crucial point in the bodhisattva path and the philosophy of mahayana altogether. Mahayana is a way of expanding, and the spiritual friend acts as the entrance to that journey. Having made a relationship with a spiritual friend already, that suggests that we relate not only with that one friend alone, but with many friends. There are friends everywhere, either seemingly threatening or seemingly attractive.

In bodhisattva language, the definition of *friend* is the idea of a guest. There is a phrase, "inviting all sentient beings as your guests." An interesting point about the word *guest,* is that when we invite a guest we have a sense of the importance of the relationship. We wouldn't invite a guest unless that guest brought some highlight, some important friendship or exchange of hospitality. Guests are usually fed specially cooked food and receive special hospitality. The life of a bodhisattva is relating with *all* sentient beings as guests. He or she is inviting everyone as a guest, constantly offering a feast.

Inviting all sentient beings as our guests is the starting point of the application of compassion. In viewing sentient beings as guests, the bodhisattva has a constant sense of the impermanence of the relationship—not that the guest is going to turn into an enemy, but that the guest is going to leave. So we view this as an opportune time, and

there is constant appreciation. We don't want to seduce our guests into our territory and hold them with us for our benefit, nor do we want to go along with our guests when they leave our home in order to ease our loneliness. We don't take a journey with our guests, we stay at home.

Our guests come. We entertain them and relate with them. Afterwards the guests thank us, we say good-bye, and we go back to running our home. There is a sense of the preciousness and the impermanence of the relationship, a sense of that relationship being extremely special. Our guest may be our husband, our wife, or our child—everybody is the guest of everybody. Although nobody completely lives up to his credentials; on a day-to-day level, each relationship is based on relating with one's guests constantly.

Compassion is a combination of maitri and generosity. It is a journey outward, communication. On one level, compassion is feeling friendly toward ourselves. On another level it is experiencing a sense of richness, that we can expand that warmth toward ourselves to other sentient beings. Compassion, from this point of view, is quite different from sympathy. Sympathy involves looking down on someone with the attitude, "I am in a secure situation, but you couldn't live at my level, so you need to be helped. You should be raised up to my level, helpless little person." Unlike sympathy, compassion is the radiation of mutual warmth to ourselves and to others.

We could look into the details of the nature of compassion, that sense of communication, how we *feel* compassionate. It is said in the scriptures that as fish cannot live without water; likewise, compassion cannot develop without egolessness, without the experience of emptiness, or *shunyata*. That may bring up the idea that compassion is quite abstract, a logical conclusion of logical mind, rather than literal. It may seem that compassion is somewhat abstract because you just feel a sense of awareness. In fact, compassion is the heart of the practice of meditation in action.

We feel the presence of compassion as a sudden glimpse, a sense of clarity and warmth simultaneously. That is the notion of *recollection*, the awareness we might experience after intense sitting meditation practice. During the sitting practice of meditation, we find ourselves completely chaotic. All kinds of things are going on, and we try to swim through those overcrowded situations of this and that, subconscious mind, discursive thoughts, and so on. Physically, sitting meditation is supposedly quiet and simple—psychologically, it is quite a nightmare. At the least it is annoying and rather inconvenient. There's a sense of rediscovering hidden corners, uncovering all sorts of areas that we haven't discovered before. And when we try to solve all the problems that arise, that only creates further problems.

That is what we might find in sitting practice—and all of that is a result of holding onto definite ideas, a result of not having enough maitri and compassion, enough security and warmth. When we sit, we feel that we are attacking and dealing with problems. We are trying to get something out of it. However, when the sitting meditation is completed, when the gong rings and we decide to stop, we find that we are experiencing *better* meditation. At that point all those struggles have gone and all the chaos is dissolved. There is a sense of relief. It is as if we were entering into nirvana—and our *meditation* was a samsaric act.

At that moment there is an absence of struggle, a sense of warmth and freedom. If we deliberately try to create that, it is impossible. Instead we come upon it by accident. The crescendo created by sitting meditation practice brings that kind of release and freedom. The nature of awareness—the real meaning of *satipatthana*, or the practice of recollection—is that feeling of presence, that feeling of relief. At that point you could say that compassion and the shunyata experience are happening simultaneously.

In daily life we don't have to *create* the concept of letting go, of being free, or anything like that at all. We can just acknowledge the

freedom that was already there—and just by the memory of it, just by the idea of it, there is a quick glimpse. A sudden glimpse. That sudden glimpse of awareness that occurs in everyday life becomes the act of compassion. We don't have to keep up with that or hold it for a long time. It is just a quick glimpse, which goes on always. It's almost a sense of experience without time to label anything, without time to feel good or bad or compassionate or empty or whatever. Just *that* happens—constantly. We could create that situation right now, at this very moment—a quick glimpse—just to see that there is awareness that is not watched or confirmed. Just awareness. A quick glimpse.

The scriptures talk about bodhisattvas who develop compassion and awareness instantly, at the same time. Even if such bodhisattvas are about to lose their awareness and go into the chaos of a samsaric situation, they can correct themselves in the process of doing so. It's like a healthy person with good balance who slips or skids: in the process of slipping, he can correct himself without falling. The force of the slipping is used as a way of rebalancing. That doesn't require any mystical experience—it is just one look, then let go.

According to the scriptures, that glimpse, if you analyze it, takes one-sixtieth of a second. It is so fast and so sharp. The sharpness is the *intelligence* of the compassion. Compassion also means being open and communicable. It contains *warmth,* because you have the desire to do such a thing. We could split that one-sixtieth of a second into sixty parts, as in the analogy of sixty flower petals being suddenly punctured with a needle. If you look at that in slow motion, you first see the needle touching a petal; then penetrating through that petal; then, having completely penetrated, getting into the next petal; again you see it touching the petal, piercing through, and going on to the next. Likewise, with compassion: first there is the sense of warmth, or maitri, in oneself; then there is a sense of cutting neurosis; and finally, there is a sense of openness. So the whole thing falls into three parts. It's very quick!

The whole thing is very abrupt. That's why what is known as the post-meditation experience, or meditation in action, is regarded as a highly powerful thing. There is no time to analyze; no time to work with it or hold on. At the same time there is a gap. In other words, there is no time to refer back to oneself as "I am doing this." There is no time to relate with *me* or ego awareness at all. It is just *awareness,* simple awareness. That awareness is regarded as the heart of meditation in action. It is compassion.

A person might develop the patience to repeat that many times in a day. By doing so, that glimpse of compassion and shunyata cuts the chain reaction of karmic causal characteristics. At the same time, you are communicating fully and completely. When the penetrating is going on, when the puncturing is going through, when you are cutting the chain—you are catching a quick glimpse of buddha nature at the same time. If that act is divided into three sections: first there is maitri, trusting in the heart; secondly, there is a gap in which you experience the openness of tathagatagarbha, or buddha nature; thirdly, there is a sense of communication in that having already woken up at that level, there a sense of freedom to expand and to relate with your actions, whatever you are doing. That seems to be how to develop compassion. The problem is that if we begin to hold onto that, or begin to analyze it, then the analytical mind begins to pollute the freshness of that sudden glimpse.

In a sense, we don't have to develop compassion. We simply acknowledge a situation that is already there: we are just seeing it, looking at it. One of the analogies used in the text, *Entering the Path of Enlightenment,* or the *Bodhicharyavatara,* is that of seeing a picture of the Buddha. If a person in a state of rage sees a picture of the Buddha painted on the wall, the merit of seeing a picture of the Buddha is not wasted. In reference to the idea of compassion, when we see a picture of the Buddha, it has all kinds of associations, such as the idea of friendliness. Seeing that compassionate Buddha creates a sudden

glimpse in our mind, which cuts through the rage and aggression. It might not cut through completely or ideally. We may not just flop like a punctured balloon—that would be expecting magic. But at least it de-intensifies the pressure of neurotic speed.

Compassion also brings a sense of communication with other people. You are constantly relating with other people in everyday-life situations, not only when you have developed a state of extreme emotional upheaval. That awareness constantly flashing again and again produces friendliness. In other words, subconsciously you begin to realize that you are no longer as vulnerable as you thought you were. There is something going on behind the facade of emotions and protections, something going on behind that whole thing. Subconsciously or consciously you begin to develop a sense of confidence, that you can afford to be open hearted. You can afford to invite all those guests into your territory and work with them, entertain them.

Compassion is not only the logical conclusion that you are going to be okay. It is almost a subconscious trick, you might call it, to deliberately create that sudden glimpse constantly. Looking back or looking forward, there is openness. Seemingly, such looking destroys the ground of ego—but surprisingly, that doesn't become a state of loss or a state of shock from the point of view of ego. Instead, it becomes something fundamentally sane, fundamentally workable and smooth.

This type of compassion is what bodhisattvas practice, and it seems that we can get into it ourselves. We can do so very simply—as long as we don't try to recreate past experiences or future expectations of the glimpse, but just look. Look! Look! The idea of compassion is direct. We might realize that the idea of becoming enlightened beings one day is not very far ahead, if we are not enlightened already. It becomes very real and very direct—it ceases to be a dream.

As that basic ground of compassion is set on the path, then magically, I suppose we could say, there is a sense of openness, almost ambition. It is ambition in the positive sense, that you would like to

extend an invitation to your guests all the time. Gentleness becomes powerful. You are not afraid to cut down, and you are not subject to idiot compassion anymore at all.

Fundamentally, the pressure of ego's speed is what causes aggression and stupidity, because you don't have a chance to examine anything when you are carried away by such great speed. As you drive yourself along through this speed you collect all kinds of garbage, which is passion. This sudden flash of compassion cuts that speed, or at least slows it down. Somebody had to decide to puncture your car tire—which is *you*! As a result, you collect less dust, less garbage, on your woolly tail. The whole situation becomes more spacious and workable.

This applies not only to us as individuals personally, but it expands to working with other people, as well. For instance, you might develop a sense that you want to help somebody. You feel very bad about someone and you want to help. You feel so excited about helping that person that you become very ambitious about that particular project. You want to make a clean sweep, create a new person; but your style is so ambitious, so speedy, that you fail to realize the details of what kind of help that person actually needs.

From the point of view of that person, you become a clown pretending to help him; there is no respect—and from your point of view, there is no time. You want to make a clean sweep, but instead you only create a thicker skin for that person, who begins to see through you and your speed. Seemingly you are acting in the name of compassion, but there is no room to be compassionate. So, in fact, it is an uncompassionate act. There is no time taken, and no patience. That kind of situation can be saved by a sudden glimpse, through looking. Such looking, such a compassionate glimpse, becomes extremely powerful, naturally workable.

DISCUSSION

IDIOT COMPASSION

STUDENT: Could you briefly describe idiot compassion?
CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Idiot compassion is the highly conceptualized idea that you want to do good to somebody. At this point, good is purely related with pleasure. For instance, somebody might say that a person needs an operation, and you defend him from the operation, saying, "He's sick already so why do we have to cut his body? We don't want to hurt him." But that is very primitive: we are trying to cure him, not destroy him. Idiot compassion also stems from not having enough courage to say no. Saying no means saying yes in the long run, but you are afraid to say that. It's like what often happens in Mexico and India. When you ask people the way, they don't want to say no to you; instead they say, "Yes, yes. It's very close. You turn right and turn right again and you'll be there." They don't say, "I don't know." That's a primitive form of idiot compassion.

ABRUPT AWARENESS

S: I'm getting the sense that one should try to open oneself and be fully compassionate at least three times a day.
CTR: The idea of opening yourself is quite different from the primitive approach of repeating God's name or thinking higher thoughts a few times a day. It is abrupt awareness, awareness which looks at yourself. It doesn't have to be strategized, but it is abrupt, a glimpse. Krishnamurti referred to this experience as "choiceless awareness." You don't have to choose it—it comes to you. However, it seems that it is not as simple as that. You have to make some effort to decide to look, but not hold onto it.
S: Rinpoche, when you were analyzing this sudden glimpse the first time, you said that it has three stages: the first is warmth, or maitri; the second is cutting through neurosis; and the third is openness.

Then a little later you went through it again and you gave the three stages slightly differently: the first as maitri; the second as gap or openness, tathagatagarbha; and the third as communication.
CTR: Piercing the chain of karma is regarded as creating a hole, so to speak, creating a gap, which is openness. But at the same time communication is also a form of openness. It is openness in the sense of not just creating a gap between you and your neighbor but going out towards it, which is saying the same thing.
S: Is the transition between the stages automatic?
CTR: At this point it is almost useless to talk about three stages, because the glimpse is so quick and so sudden that there is no point in taking notice of it. There is no point in analyzing it. The nature of the experience is that it does have those three stages. But it's not especially important to take notice of them. It just happens.
S: It seems possible that the awareness of the open space might be so attractive that you would want to stay there.
CTR: At that point you have to be able to give up. You have to deliberately push the experience away, disown it. That is extremely important. Otherwise you kill the whole thing. I mean, this glimpse is very simple. Just look! That's it. There's no problem with that.
S: Are we cognizant of the glimpse?
CTR: You are aware at the beginning and at the end, obviously. When somebody takes your photograph with a flashbulb, as it flashes you don't think, "Now my photograph is being taken," you are just dazzled by the flash. *After* you say, "Now my photograph has been taken"; and *before* you say, "My photograph *will* be taken." But that is okay; we can't start perfectly.

RECOLLECTION AND THE SUDDEN GLIMPSE

S: Earlier you said that you just had to recall the idea, but later on you said that you can't use the past to try to recreate the glimpse.
CTR: The point is that you have a recollection that such a situation

exists. Then you look, but you don't hold onto it. Rather than trying to recreate the experience you had yesterday, thinking it was a better flash than today's flash, recollection is a boundary, an outline. Deliberate action exists only at the boundary. Once you are *inside* the boundary, there is no point in making *further* boundaries. In fact, you can't—it is so quick. Before you even think you have made a boundary, you have lost it already. You haven't lost it but it has passed away. It is very sudden.

S: It seems to me that it is so fast that it almost has a foolproofness to it, it's so fast you couldn't do it wrong.

CTR: That's the whole point. You can only go wrong at the beginning, by preparing too much. In that case your flash would be a very clumsy one. Actually, you are fooling yourself, you are not flashing. And at the end, you may congratulate yourself, trying to hang onto the tail of it.

VICIOUS CIRCLES

S: When neurotic patterns get set up between people, they often become a vicious circle. All you have to do is cut that circle at one point, because once the circle is cut there's a way out.

CTR: Once you cut the circle at one point, there is a possibility of setting chaos to the whole circle. But you still have memories of the circle, so you will still go on. The way out has to be repeated many times. The circle has to be sliced thoroughly all over.

IDIOT COMPASSION

S: Talking about idiot compassion, you were saying that you should *not* do everything for everybody. But Shantideva said he would do everything for everybody, more or less.

CTR: Of course you should do everything for everybody; there is no selection involved at all. But that doesn't mean to say that you have to be gentle all the time. Your gentleness could have heart, strength. In order that your compassion doesn't become idiot compassion, you

have to use your intelligence. Otherwise, there could be the self-indulgence of thinking that you are creating a compassionate situation when in fact you are feeding the other person's aggression. If you go to a shop and the shopkeeper cheats you and you go back and let him cheat you again, that doesn't seem to be a very healthy thing to do for others.

HELPING PEOPLE

S: Is it better not to help people if you are in a speeded up state and you don't have the awareness and the gap? Is it better to do nothing all? Or is it possible that the gap can be created in the process of helping people?

CTR: That's it. You try to create a gap as you are helping people. You shouldn't give up.

S: You shouldn't go away and prepare yourself?

CTR: Everything happens on the spot, so there really is nothing to prepare. In any given situation, as things are exposed to you, the preparation and skillful means happen simultaneously.

SUDDEN RELAXATION

S: When you reach a climax of hope and fear, there's a sudden relaxation. There's a really vivid moment of intense relaxation and emptiness. You are only likely to stay in it for a couple of seconds. Although it is very dramatic, it might last only for a few moments, like a flash in sitting. Is that the kind of experience you are talking about?

CTR: I think so, yes. It happens with any kind of clarity. The experience of clarity might last for half a day or half an hour, but you can't repeat it. That sudden glimpse is an aspect of clarity. It has a similar quality to the sudden glimpse of compassion.

S: Within the experience of clarity, are there gaps between the moments of clarity or is it one whole thing?

CTR: It is one sudden thing you can't define. The scriptures talk about

touching and penetrating and releasing compassion, but that almost becomes a myth because it happens so fast.

S: Is the time between glimpses a state of pure hell?

CTR: Whatever you would like to call it. It is *this*.

S: Would you say that the glimpse is stepping out of the whole wheel of life?

CTR: Not necessarily. The glimpse is just cutting the umbilical cord. Just that. Seeing the no-man's land.

S: If you don't let go of the experience, I suppose that would make everything worse afterwards. You would be struggling to get back there.

CTR: Yes, very much so. Then the experience becomes a trip. You keep trying to get higher and higher, better and better. Quite possibly we could categorize this by serial numbers—glimpse one, glimpse two, glimpse zero—which becomes a big trip.

DHYANA STATES

S: How does this relate to the levels of absorption, or *dhyanas*, in hinayana?

CTR: The dhyana states are less abrupt—they are different intensities of rest. There is no flash of clarity, simply a kind of absorption. It's like being concerned with whether you had a good sleep, a bad sleep, or a relatively good one. The sudden glimpse cuts through those absorptions, as well. So there are two levels: developing the experience of the realm of the gods, which is the dhyana states, and transcending the dhyana states, which is the development of wisdom. According to Buddhism, wisdom transcends the god realm. From this point of view, it is nirvana experience, rather than samsaric experience.

Five

LEAP OF CONFIDENCE

So far, we have not studied the bodhisattva path thoroughly, we have just had a preliminary glimpse of the bodhisattva path. We have an idea of the basic psychology of the bodhisattva, or the bodhisattva's mentality, and how one develops it. Now we could discuss the idea of commitment to the bodhisattva path and the bodhisattva vow.[2]

The bodhisattva's mentality consists of two aspects. The first aspect is the *general meditative state of mind*, the awareness or glimpse that we discussed in Chapter Four. That is referred to as the absolute aspect. The second, or relative, aspect is *the actual application of this in our day-to-day life*. So the commitment of a person's whole being to the bodhisattva path involves not only a commitment to the basic sanity of the bodhisattva, but also the commitment to work with what comes up in day-to-day living. It is a commitment not only to contemplative practice, but to working with situations that require decisions and the function of discursive thoughts to make the right decisions.

Joining the bodhisattva path is not by faith alone—there should be a sense of conviction and intelligence, almost to the level of intellect. It is important to be able to sort things out, to distinguish between skillful means and unskillful means. You need to know how to work with situations, how to handle them. If you regard the bodhisattva path as purely following some pre-existing law, with headlines of this and that; unless you know the bodhisattva's bible by heart, you cannot keep track of all that. But if you begin to see the bodhisattva path

as an existing feeling or basic understanding; you realize that skillful means is not based on prescriptions in books but on prescriptions given by your own innate nature or basic understanding.

Having taking the bodhisattva vow and committed yourself to the bodhisattva path, there's a tremendous sense of excitement. You want to do everything and handle every situation extraordinarily. You feel that you could save people on the spot, that you could help people by sacrificing your next meal or your next nap. But that doesn't seem to be quite enough. In fact, quite possibly, if you do not take care of your own body and energy, your bodhisattva action will become very sloppy and tedious as a result of your being too tired. You have been putting too much energy into working with other people without regard to your own basic health. So the bodhisattva's skillful means does not only go outward; it also involves tremendous concern for one's own body, one's own basic being. There is a sense of responsibility in all directions.

The sense of excitement can be an obstacle on the bodhisattva path. You feel so excited that you want to convert everybody to your trip. You would like to make everyone a replica of yourself. This is one of the first big mistakes that an adolescent bodhisattva can make. There is so much inspiration, so much energy, that you begin to feel that you could conquer the whole world. There is so much conviction that the bodhisattva could be blinded by it. You are not able to see the situation beyond that emotional conviction and sense of excitement.

At the same time, that conviction should be nursed. The idea is not just to play it safe. Security is not in question, particularly. What is lacking in that approach is vision. Your vision is limited; you are unable to see. Rather than developing the panoramic vision to see how the whole thing works, you are purely interested in converting other people in the bodhisattva path. But in the bodhisattva path there is a sense of totality. There is *comprehensive* vision, seeing what needs to be done in the present situation, but at the same time, not being

rushed into it. There is a sense of experiencing what comes next, an emphasis on the future and on creating the right atmosphere or working base for that. It is about relating with other people.

The question is whether or not the bodhisattva's attitude is involved with the ambition of ego. Even if the bodhisattva's ego is associated with enlightenment, it is still ego; so it is subject to spiritual materialism. On the bodhisattva path there is a sense of giving away and destroying your ambition at the same time as you are building your inspiration. That is one of the basic points of skillful means: you have enough power to exert your energy, but at the same time you have enough gentleness to change your decisions to suit the given situation.

The bodhisattva's approach is a gentle but powerful effort, which is based on prajna. Here prajna involves both skillful means and knowledge. Developing basic prajna is almost like becoming an enlightened politician. You are aware of the surrounding situation, but at the same time you are also aware of your version of it. So you don't just give in to what is happening, but your version has something to do with it as well. Every corner has been seen with the skillful means of the bodhisattva approach.

Texts such as *Forty-Six Ways in Which a Bodhisattva Fails,*[3] which describe the bodhisattva discipline, talk about not presenting the dharma if the listener is uninterested; not associating with heretics; and not refusing an invitation to teach. All those guidelines, if you look at them very generally, may seem to be illogical and confusing. But once you begin to look at them as they apply to real, definite situations, you can see that they have a logical working basis. When there is a pull towards ego, that could be cut. When there is hesitation to step outside of ego, to loosen one's grip—one could let loose and go. When there is hesitation about not being able to make a correct decision, one could push oneself into the situation so that the direction comes about naturally.

Skillful means, from the point of view of prajna mentality, could be said to be slightly paranoid or fearful of consequences. This is a product

of egolessness, because if you have nothing, if there is no project to achieve, if you are not drawing things in your direction, then there is a sense of absence of ambition. That empty-heartedness could be said to be paranoid. At the same time, there is the inspiration to deal with situations perfectly and directly. So there is also a sense of pride. This is not pride in the pejorative sense, but pride in the sense of clear perception—seeing what needs to be done, what should be fulfilled. So the bodhisattva mentality of skillful means consists of a sense of ambition and also a sense of tentativeness. Tentativeness means allowing suggestions to come to you from outside, so that you can utilize situations. You are not afraid to do so, because that whole process is one's basic inspiration.

There seems to be a tremendous subtlety of perception in the bodhisattva path. That subtlety comes from a sense of basic warmth, a compassionate mentality, along with the shunyata mentality of openness—compassion and openness operating simultaneously. It seems to be extremely difficult to develop that just by magic. We cannot develop it by doing some unrelated technique like standing on our heads or reciting certain formulas that supposedly provide sympathetic vibrations toward that practice. According to the bodhisattva's way, we have to get into it—we have to *do it*! It as if we had all those faculties such as generosity, patience, discipline, energy, meditation, and knowledge already in us. On the whole, some kind of leap seems to be necessary—leap in the sense of developing basic confidence. We might feel that we are inadequate, but nevertheless we pretend we can do it. We push ourselves into that situation. It is similar to taking the bodhisattva vow. There is tremendous pretense involved. We are uncertain whether we are able to tread on the bodhisattva's path or not, but we still decide to do it. This confidence is known as *pranidhana*, which means "vision."

Fundamentally there is hope. There is space for vision, space where vision could be worked through and distributed. Looking back and looking to the future are equally necessary, particularly in actually

practicing the bodhisattva's way in day-to-day living. There is a sense of fearlessness, that there is a solid working basis. We don't have to shy away from what is happening, and, at the same time, we don't have to exaggerate it either. We could just accept the given situation and work with it directly and simply as it happens.

DISCUSSION

SAVING SENTIENT BEINGS

STUDENT: The bodhisattva has committed himself to save all sentient beings, yet he himself is a sentient being. How is he different?

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: The bodhisattva has vision. He is already inspired; whereas, the others are not—so he has to work with them. As far as he is concerned, his salvation is there already; he doesn't particularly have to cultivate it. What he has to cultivate is working with others who might lack his openness.

OVEREXTENDING

S: Rinpoche, you said that a bodhisattva should take care of his body and energy in order not to overextend himself. How can he do that without living a self-centered life?

CTR: I think that comes naturally. A bodhisattva has a natural sense of the limits of his own physical strength. A bodhisattva wouldn't punish himself or say, "That's just my imagination, my comfort-oriented trip." The difference between impulse and real need would be quite obvious.

TAKING THE BODHISATTVA VOW FOR THE WRONG REASONS

S: Could there be a problem if a person wants to take the bodhisattva vow for the wrong reasons?

CTR: That's possible.

S: In a situation like that, would it make sense to leap over the uncertainty, or would that be a further obstacle and just add to the confusion?

CTR: If the bodhisattva has a wrong attitude, there will naturally be

some chaos creating obstacles to his journey. Things won't fit together, things won't fall into a workable situation. Obviously, instead of giving away his ego-oriented ambition, he is working towards rudrahood.

SURRENDERING EGO

S: You talked about the seriousness of deciding to make a leap. I'm wondering if it is possible, having made that leap, to realize you were wrong. If so, could you change directions at that point, or would it be better just to continue along as you are?
CTR: I don't think you can maneuver around it. You have to make a definite break, a fresh start. The problem is that you have not been able to surrender your ego. When you suddenly try to do so and get back to the right path, you cannot do it because there has been no basic generosity or surrendering. Sooner or later you have to be humiliated. Sooner or later your ego has to be humiliated. You have to face that. That requires an operation, a big jump, a drastic change. It requires that you not continue to follow the process you are on, but acknowledge that it is not a very positive approach. It requires that you come back and change your mind.

[2] This talk was given after the bodhisattva vow ceremony. The text for the bodhisattva vow is included as Appendix.

[3] A traditional text on the many ways a bodhisattva counteracts the practice of the six paramitas, translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee, can be found in the book *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* by Chögyam Trungpa, Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1993.

Six

IDENTIFYING WITH THE TEACHINGS

The skillful means of the bodhisattva extends to a sense of identifying with the practice. If there is no identification with the teachings and the practice of the bodhisattva—if a person has a purely intellectual relationship with the teachings and the hope that the spiritual friend may be able to guide him—there seems to be a discrepancy. The bodhisattva's way is one of tremendous identification with the dharma. The dharma is no longer regarded as simply following the books, the scriptures, or the doctrine—dharma is following one's own conviction. When such conviction has been awakened in the bodhisattva, the teachings become pure confirmation. That is a very important point.

If a person has not completely taken refuge in the dharma as a path and has not completely taken the vow in the way of the bodhisattva, there is still an impersonal attitude towards the teachings; so making a commitment is very complicated. In deciding whether you should commit yourself to the teachings or not, you are still thinking of it in terms of joining a club or society rather than as a real pursuit.

In relating with the teachings of the bodhisattva path, commitment means that a person has already surrendered the notion of intellectual speculation on the teachings. He or she has also surrendered the need for proof. So that person does not ask, "If I do this, what result am I going to gain?" He has given up such theorizing and searching for security. He has given up the need to know that what he is getting into is foolproof and really works. If you are buying a new gadget, there is

no point in possessing that gadget if it doesn't work. But the bodhisattva's way has nothing at all to do with purchasing anything or joining a club—it is simply commitment to the practice and to the teachings. That commitment comes from the individual rather than from any external reinforcement.

The bodhisattva's way of relating to the spiritual friend is similar, in that the spiritual friend is seen as the vanguard or spokesman of the teachings. As the bodhisattva works with the spiritual friend, he is also working with his own involvement and commitment to the teachings; so the spiritual friend and the teachings are complementary. Therefore, for the bodhisattva, making a definite decision to be involved with the spiritual friend is not a big deal, or the only hope he or she can latch onto. Neither is purely dealing with the teachings without the spiritual friend a big deal. They are complementary, both ways.

Basically, we could summarize the teachings of the bodhisattva path as a way of transcending aggression. You are working with aggression, and as you begin to work with aggression, that commitment becomes part of your practice. Doctrinal studies do not bring out your aggression, although doctrinal texts talk about how to deal with aggression; living life brings out aggression and speed. Leading your life automatically shows you how to relate with the complexities of your mental activities and emotions.

Identification with the teachings also means developing a sense of friendship with the doctrine. The teachings are regarded as a friendly message rather than reading a menu. When you read a menu, you develop a business-like mentality. How much does it cost? Which is the most delicious food to order? You are rejecting one dish and ordering another dish. With a sense of friendliness towards the doctrine, or the dharma, you cannot pick and choose. It is a complete process. You can't say, "I prefer generosity rather than patience, so I'll have that." For that matter, you cannot reject the hinayana and only accept the mahayana. You must begin with hinayana and slowly proceed along

to the mahayana. If you are able to do that, that is the real demonstration of identification with the teachings.

As we identify with the teachings, at the same time we can also identify with the teacher, or the spiritual friend. However, there is a certain kind of watcher, a certain aggression, which keeps us from identifying with the teachings. It includes, for one thing, the business-like mentality of always asking, "Which is the safest and best thing to do? What is the most efficient approach?" We watch ourselves developing or not developing, and when we get bored with what we are doing, we are always looking at possibilities of changing course. For instance, if we are bored with one class, we look into another class, or another department.

There is also a sense of personal indignation, that you don't want to be reduced into a nonexistent person. Each time the penetrating words of the teachings begin to come through, you feel personally humiliated. To the extent that you did not know these things and somebody else did—that somebody else knew better than you—you are constantly challenged. There is a sense of competition. Connected with this is that you want to impress your friends, your students, and other people. You are looking for topics or subjects you can use to impress people. You wouldn't tell people, "I just read about this topic this morning," but you would talk about it as if you had known it for a long time. All those situations—such as the sense of indignation, the sense of wanting to impress other people, or the sense of wanting to choose the best one—pervert the teachings. They are based on failing to identify with the teachings.

In the hinayana path you are pushed into disciplines and there are all kinds of recommendations. The way of identifying with the dharma is to regard the dharma as a whip. The truth of suffering is somewhat external: it pushes you like a whip behind a slave. In the mahayana it is much more open than that. It is only by identifying with the teachings that you are inspired—that is what pushes you. You are not taking refuge in the dharma as something external or

purely a command—the dharma is something you identify yourself with. If there is any discrepancy or any doubt—"Should I get into it? Should I jump into it or shouldn't I?"—that is a sign of being unable to identify with the teachings as the truth. The teachings are still regarded as taking out an insurance policy. It is still business mentality.

In the beginning of the bodhisattva path there is the development of maitri, making friends with oneself. Maitri is an experience. It is not that somebody is telling you how to make friends with yourself so you are pushed into it. That doesn't happen. Rather you find yourself making friends. You have to make friends with yourself and see the logic that you are good or bad not as praise or threat but as something you have to work on. You can work on yourself.

Finding a spiritual friend is also a way of involving yourself with the teachings. The spiritual friend acts as a mirror reflection. Your doubts and hesitations are being thrown back at you, so you feel extremely threatened and confused. Your own private parts are exposed by the medium of the spiritual friend, in that mirror reflection. In that way, you develop further involvement with the teachings.

The development of compassion and the paramita practices of generosity, patience, discipline, and so forth, are also ways of involving yourself further with the teachings. Rather than being converted into this particular trip, there is a sense of constantly being challenged and having to get yourself involved. It is like eating and drinking. When you are hungry you eat food, when you are thirsty you drink water. It is not necessary that you believe or have faith in the food and water. You have a personal demand for food and water because food protects you from hunger and water protects you from thirst. So you create the food and you create the water, rather than someone pushing you into eating and drinking. You feel a real need.

When you feel tired, you fall asleep—you feel your need to rest. Likewise, with generosity you feel your need to open more, so you get into being more generous. With discipline, you feel you need to put

yourself in situations in which you can work with the details of life rather than frivolously ignoring the whole thing. So you get into discipline. Patience is also necessary, because without something to work with to develop patience, you feel constant boredom, constant loss of the substance of life. So you get into patience because you need to create further substance and solidity to your life. In regard to energy, working hard, you feel worn out. You feel used up by the sense of constant speed. Your energy has been lost, so you need to build it up—therefore you work hard, diligently.

Meditation is likewise. When your whole experience is scattered, with no structure, and your subconscious mind of discursive thoughts and emotions is shooting out all over the place, there is no focus, no paying attention. So you develop meditation—to simplify all those complications. With prajna, or knowledge, you begin to feel that you are so vague and diffused that there's no definite understanding of things as they are. Because there is tremendous vagueness, you need to develop prajna, knowledge.

None of these paramita practices are imposed on you. It is not that somebody says it is good for you to practice the paramitas although it is painful. Paramita practice is something you feel you need. Paramita practice is like eating food when you are hungry, drinking water when you are thirsty, or resting when you are tired.

As long as we have awakened to the attitude of heroism of the bodhisattva's way, we are going to proceed along. We are not going to rest. Even when we do rest, it is part of our journey. If we are not walking but resting, that is only to regain further energy to walk. As long as there is a sense of ongoing process rather than wanting to stay in the snugness of self-indulgence of ego's neurosis, there is a constant journey taking place.

That constant journey demands certain requirements. Various skillful means are necessary. These skillful means come along as we feel we need them. On the whole this is the result of our commitment

to the teachings. We feel one with the teachings as we feel one with our body. Because we feel one with our body, we feel what our body needs. Our body needs rest, shelter, clothing, food, drink. Similarly, because we feel one with the teachings, with all these skillful means and practices of the bodhisattva way, we feel intuitively what needs to be done. In other words, unless there is a sense of involvement with the teachings, complete identification with the teachings, whatever we try to do is like shooting an arrow in the dark. Most often it is ineffective, and it does not fulfill the demands we want to achieve.

On the whole we could say that the basic definition of the bodhisattva path is that sense of involvement and identification with the teachings. It is complete identification with the teachings and with life; complete identification with bodhichitta, with buddha nature, with the paramitas, and with the spiritual friend. There is something *real* about the whole thing. You are not afraid to get into it, to latch onto it.

Identification with the teachings is an important point of the bodhisattva path and the teachings of mahayana. It is not that you have to be smart so that you can choose which item is the best to have. At the same time, it is not based on blind faith either. Instead, you feel what you *need,* and you *involve* yourself in it. The mahayana is based on a sense of sympathy towards oneself, compassion towards oneself. If you don't relate with your body, with your basic being, so to speak, there is no sympathy to your being. Without sympathy, you would purely be involving yourself with a fantasy dream world, rather than actually experiencing what needs to be done—which is a very intelligent act rather than an act of blind faith.

That seems to be the summary of mahayana practice: complete identification with the teachings. Bodhichitta is implanted in your heart. Therefore, you are the embodiment of bodhichitta, the awakened state of mind. Your creation, your being is bodhichitta. You are no longer dealing with foreign elements coming from outside; you are awakening your intelligence as you go along. Your intelligence

becomes greater and greater, more and more powerful. It begins to eat through the skins of ego, the layers and layers of ego-manufactured walls and barriers. That's why the idea of *awake* rather than *saved* is important in the bodhisattva approach.

DISCUSSION

CYNICISM AND FRIVOLITY

STUDENT: You have emphasized maintaining a cynical attitude. When we choose the bodhisattva path, do we give that up, or is giving that up blind faith?

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Giving up cynicism is blind faith. When you develop an intelligent attitude as to what you definitely need, the frivolity of what you may not need but you think you need could be stripped away by a cynical attitude. Once you identify with the teachings, you begin to know what would be best and what would be a frivolous thing to do. As you go along, there will be successive frivolous mentalities happening—and you could cut those down.

PUSHING OR NOT PUSHING

S: There seems to be a very strong desire to confirm the reality of the teachings, to have a glimpse that it actually happens. You want it to be true so much that the desire itself can become an obstacle. That desire could be an expression of the *lack* of faith in the teachings. So it could be an expression of faith in the teachings *not* to push on all the time.

CTR: Even if you decide not to push, you are still making a forward journey. It is like changing your car tire when you have a puncture. That is also a part of the journey you are going along. So it's the same thing.

MIRRORING

S: Rinpoche, what is the difference between the way the sangha, the people we are living with, become mirrors to us and the way you represent a mirror to us?

CTR: I don't see any difference, particularly. In the case of your own friends, even if something reflects back on you, you may not believe that it is the real mirror. However, when you work with the teacher, you feel that the mirror must be a more profound one. But in actual fact, it is the same thing. It is a question of how much you are open to it.
S: When you are dealing with your friends, the question arises of your trips and their trips. It is different than with the spiritual friend, where you have the confidence to say, "It's *your* trip." You don't have to try to sort out this trip and that trip.
CTR: I think that's a matter of opinion, actually. It's like going to a surgeon who is your relative or going to a surgeon who has nothing to do with you. The surgeon who is your relative might have a personal concern about you, so he might make a mistake. So you go to somebody who is impersonal to you instead.
S: In dealing with our friends, it seems necessary to consider their trips in terms of the mirror reflection.
CTR: I suppose it's a question of what part is your version of them bouncing back on you and what part is really their true nature.

TRUE NATURE

S: Rinpoche, what do you mean by their true nature?
CTR: Their true nature is different than your version of them. The true nature of the other person may be an act of neurosis, of frivolousness, or whatever.
S:. When you are relating to another person, is their true nature their buddha nature, or is their true nature the way they manifest themselves? Is their true nature what is there beyond their hostilities and aggression, or is their true nature just their trips? Is it the way they are, their style, their buddha nature, everything?
CTR: I think of true nature in terms of their neurosis as well as their insight. It's their basic being. In other words, you don't lay preconceptions on them. Therefore you could see their neurosis coming out of

them as well as insight coming out of them—which is very hard to do.
S: So their true nature is where they are at at the time, which you can't possibly understand?
CTR: Quite possibly you can't—but there is a possibility that you might be able to do so.

AWARENESS AND VOWS

S: I feel that I need awareness in order to keep the refuge and bodhisattva vows, but I see that I'm not aware. There's always this haunting feeling that I'm not keeping the vows because I don't have the necessary awareness. Are you saying that I should have faith that this awareness will come?
CTR: You don't have to develop awareness, particularly. As long as you see that you are *not* aware, that in itself is awareness.
S: But that doesn't help me work with the bodhisattva path. There isn't any discrimination. I'm not aware enough to deal with situations.
CTR: If you realize that you aren't aware, that's the whole point. You don't have to catch yourself being aware all the time. You do not have to feel good or to feel that you are always a solid, balanced person—the idea is to catch yourself. You see that you are not aware, then you create a gap. That gap doesn't necessarily have to be a good one; it could be a quite horrific one. Nevertheless, that gap in itself becomes very helpful because you begin to see that you are not aware of it.
S: How does that help?
CTR: It begins to break the chain reaction of speed.
S: Does it let you become more aware after that?
CTR: That is awareness.

FEELING THE NEED TO PRACTICE

S: Rinpoche, you said that as you go along the bodhisattva path, you feel a real need for certain practices, like the paramita practices; so nothing is imposed on you. There seems to be a very fuzzy line in my

head between an intellectual approach and the way needs appear in my mind. Things seem to be coming out of my mind, but I am not sure whether they are thoughts or the gap.

CTR: Once you begin to analyze the nature of need, you are treating yourself and the teachings impersonally. I mean, we don't have intellectual hunger when we want to eat food; we have real hunger. We actually, physically need food. So there is no room for analyzing. The whole thing has to be very straightforward and very direct. It has to be abrupt.

RECOGNIZING THE GAP

S: Rinpoche, is recognizing the gap, the gap, or not recognizing it? Are you aware when it is taking place?

CTR: You do have some awareness when it is taking place. It is like when you suddenly fall down: you have some sense that you fell down. But then there is another kind of awareness, which is confirming that gap. That comes much later.

HUNGER FOR DHARMA

S: Rinpoche, where does hunger for the dharma come from? Does it come from something that happened in previous lives?

CTR: It is a very real thing. You feel that you are inadequate and you need further strength at that given moment—and you pick up on it. It's a very natural thing. Something is missing, and you want to fill the gap.

IDENTIFYING WITH THE TEACHINGS

S: Rinpoche could you talk a bit more about complete identification with the teachings?

CTR: Identifying with the teachings means that the teachings are not regarded as belonging to the teacher alone, but they are also a part of you. That is precisely what is meant by the teachings being true. If they are true, basically, they should apply to you as well to the teacher. When there is a fire, the firemaker gets burned as well as the person watching

the fire. So there is no *belonging*, as far as the teachings are concerned. They are not purely information, they exist as a living situation. So the teachings transcend doctrine. In this sense, the teachings have nothing to do with the technical aspects of the dharma—they are just reality.

S: Could the same thing be said for the teacher?

CTR: Yes. That seems to be the meaning of spiritual friend. The spiritual friend is a friend for all, rather than a friend for one particular situation or one particular person.

BODY

S: You said something about not trusting your body. I'm not sure what you mean by that.

CTR: It's a question of feeling that there is a natural organic situation happening. If you don't relate with that, then your ground is lost, and you have no way of developing clarity. Body, in this case, is a sense of experience, real experience.

PRETENDING TO PRACTICE

S: You said we should pretend as if we can practice in this way, but in trying to practice generosity, patience, or meditation, what happens is that you see your lack, that you are *not* really generous, patient, and so forth. You have this feeling of always being less than the teachings, rather than feeling you are up to it, or you can master it, or it is coming through you.

CTR: As long as you begin to make everything solid and sure, I don't think you can get anywhere. As you begin to realize your deception, that is another deception. So you have to trust your first perception of being a fool. You start by being a fool. You are giving away security, being a fool.

PARAMITA PRACTICE

S: Rinpoche among the contradictions to the paramita of morality is not committing evil acts for the sake of compassion. Another contra-

diction to the paramita of morality is rejecting immoral people. Those seem to be extraordinary reversals of ordinary emotions and morality. Could you say something about that?

CTR: From the hinayana point of view, or a very traditional idea of evil, such actions are evil. However, in the mahayana, if somebody is so highly involved with food that they have stashes of food stuck in their room, it is your duty to steal it from them. That is an evil act according to hinayana—you should not steal—but in the mahayana you are *supposed* to do that! It is some kind of a joke!

ACTIONS AND IMPULSES

S: If you are angry, should you just be aware of that and have faith that it is all going to work out okay? Suppose you think it is harmful and you want to stop doing it—do you have any advice on skillful means for dealing with that, or for imposing some kind of discipline on yourself?

CTR: If you have an impulse that you want to kill somebody, and you have faith that you are going to kill that person and it's going to be okay—somehow that doesn't work. The very act of killing somebody is a cowardly thing to do. You can have faith in your anger—but you don't have to kill somebody, particularly. That anger is a self-contained thing, so going as far as murdering somebody doesn't apply. The point is to have faith in the basic being of the anger, rather than have faith in the impulse.

S: Many times the action you do arises spontaneously out of the impulse.

CTR: Such actions could be regarded as needless.

S: When you feel an impulse, such as the impulse to have a cigarette, is it really important whether you act on it or not, if you are aware of both the impulse and the action? Maybe that is being too hard or strict on yourself.

CTR: I think there are degrees of actions, of how much rebounds from your actions, and how much your actions are free. If you have to go

to the toilet you don't say that is purely in the mind, or a frivolous thing, unless it is obviously psychosomatic. Some actions are not regarded as frivolous, but organic. Saying that going out and murdering someone is frivolous is another matter altogether. You don't have to go out and kill somebody in order to survive, like you need to go to the toilet. It's a different matter altogether. So there is a sense of fantasy and there is a sense of reality. The question is what your body needs in order to survive and what your emotion needs in order to survive.

S: What do you mean by rebound?

CTR: When things become heavy-handed, you get consequences. If an action is just simple and direct, then there are no consequences.

S: Rinpoche, can you give an example?

CTR: Smoking a cigarette and killing somebody are entirely different. Killing someone needs more emotional build-up; smoking a cigarette needs less. However, if you had planted a bomb in the cigarette or you had been told that smoking a cigarette is a terrible, sinful destructive thing to do; it could become the same as murdering somebody because of your attitude.

S: In that situation, should one try to lose that attitude and make it a simple act, or realize that it is complicated?

CTR: It depends on how you approach it. It is possible that Hitler's attitude toward murdering Jews was to him like smoking another cigarette. It all depends on your attitude, how crazy you are.

S: Would it be true to say that if you act simply and directly, there are no consequences; but if you did the same thing calculating with your intellect or with your emotions, then you would create more karma for yourself? It isn't necessarily the type of act you do that matters?

CTR: It is your attitude *as well as* what type of act you do. Any action you do has all kinds of attitudes in it already. Whatever you do has different degrees of heaviness, so you can't just say everything is just attitude; action has something to do with it as well. I mean, breaking

bottles is different from murdering somebody. Different attitudes go with different actions. So they are reciprocal.

S: In the case of the Samurai warrior, their killing somebody may be a very simple and direct thing.

CTR: I wouldn't say the Samurai warrior is acting within the attitude of the enlightenment approach. But their style, their philosophy, is fearlessness, which is good. The case of Buddha killing the bandit to save five hundred peoples' lives is another question. Five hundred people are more important than one person. So it is a matter of degree, a matter of how much consequences are involved with that act.

S: How can the Buddha be sure that one person would kill the five hundred people? He hadn't killed the five hundred people, yet.

CTR: Maybe he had a record, we do not know.

S: If I know I don't need the cigarette, if I know it is frivolous, a fantasy; is it my duty as a bodhisattva not to have one?

CTR: It seems to be purely up to you whether you regard smoking cigarettes as frivolous or as just something that you do, a simple act.

S: Actions and impulses are very subtle. It is often difficult to determine whether acting is acting on impulse or acting spontaneously. How does one go about detecting the difference?

CTR: It depends. Certain actions mean a lot to you and certain actions are pure occupation; certain actions are harmful and certain actions are communication. When you are trying to destroy somebody or to create destruction, that action is not an expression of compassion; it is unaware and insensitive. Communication is connected with love and compassion. It says in the bodhisattva texts that passion is preferable to aggression because passion accepts the situation and aggression rejects the situation. That is one of the ideas of the bodhisattva path.

S: Is judging other people's actions a dangerous self-defeating process?

CTR: It seems that way, unless there is some warmth in the judgment, in that you want to relate with those people and help them. Otherwise, it becomes very cold. You are just sharpening your sword.

S: Not expressing your emotions might be viewed as cutting off communication. That could be a problem.

CTR: The whole point is to start by communicating with yourself. Seventy-five percent of the world is you; after that, there is another world outside, the other twenty-five percent. If you don't cut communication with yourself, if you are completely in communication with yourself, then there is no problem. Expression comes out naturally.

From *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva

Like the earth and the pervading elements,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
For boundless multitudes of living beings,
May I be their ground and sustenance.

Thus for every thing that lives,
As far as are the limits of the sky,
May I provide their livelihood and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bonds of suffering.

Just as all the buddhas of the past
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas
Step by step abode and trained,

Just so, and for the benefit of beings,
I will also have this attitude of mind,
And in those precepts, step by step,
I will abide and train myself.

That this most pure and spotless state of mind
Might be embraced and constantly increase,
The prudent who have cultivated it
Should praise it highly in such words as these:

Today my life has given fruit.
This human state has now been well assumed.
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line,
And have become the Buddha's child and heir.

In every way, then, I will undertake
Activities befitting such a rank.
And I will do no act to mar
Or compromise this high and faultless lineage.

For I am like a blind man who has found
A precious gem within a mound of filth.
Exactly so, as if by some strange chance,
The enlightened mind has come to birth in me.

This is the draft of immortality,
That slays the Lord of Death, the slaughterer of beings,
The rich unfailing treasure-mine
To heal the poverty of wanderers.

It is the sovereign remedy,
That perfectly allays all maladies.
It is the wishing tree bestowing rest
On those who wander wearily the pathways of existence.

It is the universal vehicle that saves
All wandering beings from the states of loss—
The rising moon of the enlightened mind
That soothes the sorrows born of the afflictions.

It is a mighty sun that utterly dispels
The gloom and ignorance of wandering beings,
The creamy butter, rich and full,
All churned from milk of holy Teaching.

Living beings! Wayfarers upon life's paths,
Who wish to taste the riches of contentment,
Here before you is the supreme bliss—
Here, 0 ceaseless wanderers, is your fulfillment!

And so, within the sight of all protectors,
I summon every being, calling them to buddhahood—
And till that state is reached, to every earthly joy!
May gods and demigods, and all the rest, rejoice!

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

arhat Practitioner at the highest stage of attainment in the hinayana.

bodhichitta "Mind/heart of awakening." Sometimes called buddha nature, it is the awakened heart and mind inherent in all human beings. Bodhichitta is discussed in terms of absolute and relative, although these two aspects are inseparable. Ultimate, or absolute bodhichitta is the union of emptiness and compassion, the essential nature of awakened mind. Relative bodhichitta is the tenderness arising from a glimpse of ultimate bodhichitta that inspires one to train oneself to work for the benefit of others.

bodhisattva "Awake being" or "warrior of awakening." A person who has completely overcome confusion and who is committed to cultivating bodhichitta, wisdom, and compassion through the practice of the six paramitas in order to free all beings from suffering,

bodhisattva path Another term for the mahayana.

bodhisattva vow The formal vow of aspiration to become a bodhisattva so that one can liberate all beings from suffering.

Bodhicharyavatara *Entering the Path of Enlightenment* by Shantideva. A major text of mahayana Buddhism on how to realize the nature of existence, and the compassion that arises from such realization.

dharma 1. Teachings or truth, specifically the teachings of the Buddha, also called the buddhadharma. 2. Phenomena in general.

Lower dharma is how things work on the mundane level, e.g. how water boils. Higher dharma is the subtle understanding of the world—how mind works, how samsara perpetuates itself and how it is transcended, and so on.

dhyana states Meditative states of absorption—the experience of the realm of the gods, which needs to be transcended in order to develop wisdom. Although strictly speaking these states can be "achieved" by advanced practitioners, Trungpa Rinpoche sometimes speaks of them pejoratively and warns that they should be cut through.

Gampopa (1079-1153) The fifth major Kagyü enlightened lineage holder and foremost disciple of the yogin Milarepa. Gampopa combined the Kadam teachings of Atisha with the mahamudra tradition stemming from the Indian masters Tilopa and Naropa.

garbha "Essence" or "nature." See also tathagatagarbha.

Guhyasamajatantra A root tantra of the anuttara-yoga tradition.

guru "Master," "teacher."

hinayana "Narrow way, " "lesser vehicle." The first of the three yanas of Tibetan Buddhism which is subdivided into the shravakayana and pratyekabuddhayana. The focus of the hinayana is on individual salvation through taming one's mind and on causing no harm to others. It is the essential starting point on the path.

jnana "Primordial knowledge/wisdom." The wisdom activity of enlightenment, transcending all dualistic conceptualization. One's being is spontaneously wise, without needing to seek for it. Jnana is the wisdom which manifests when the mind is no longer obscured.

kalyanamitra "Spiritual friend." It is said that in the hinayana one views one's teacher as an elder, in the mahayana as a spiritual friend, and in the vajrayana as a vajra master.

karuna "Compassion." A key principle of mahayana Buddhism,

describing the motivation and action of a bodhisattva, i.e. the practice of the paramitas. Compassion is said to arise from experiencing the suffering of sentient beings, including ourselves.

kleshas "Poisonous emotions" or "defilements." The three main poisonous emotions are passion (or desire, attachment) aggression (or anger) and ignorance (or delusion). The five poisons are the three above plus pride and jealousy.

Krishnamirti (1895-1986) An Indian philosopher educated in England who traveled the world teaching and advocating a way of life and thought unconditioned by the limitations of nationality, race, and religion.

mahayana "Great vehicle." Also called the "open path" or the "path of the bodhisattva." Going beyond the somewhat nihilistic emptiness of the hinayana schools and the preoccupation with individual liberation, the great vehicle presents vision based on shunyata (emptiness), compassion, and the acknowledgment of universal buddha nature. The mahayana path begins when one discovers bodhichitta in oneself and vows to develop it in order to benefit others. The path proceeds by cultivating absolute and relative bodhichitta. The result is full awakening. The ideal figure of the mahayana is the bodhisattva who is fully awake and who works for the benefit of all beings.

maitri "Loving-kindness," "friendliness." In connection with compassion, or karuna, maitri refers to the process of making friends with oneself as the starting point for developing compassion for others. Maitri also means the intention that subsequently manifests as compassion.

paramita "Transcendent," " perfection," or " gone to the other shore." The six practices of the mahayana path are generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and knowledge. They are called transcendent because they carry us across the river of confused existence.

prajna "Transcendent knowledge" or "perfect knowledge," the sixth

paramita. Prajna is the eyes and the other five paramitas are the limbs of bodhisattva activity. Prajna can also mean wisdom, understanding, or discrimination. At its most developed level it means seeing things from a nondualistic point of view.

pranidhana "Aspiration" or "vision."

samadhi "Meditation" or "concentration."

samsara Confused existence; the world of struggle and suffering that is based on ego-clinging, conflicting emotions, and habitual patterns. Its root cause is ignorance of our true nature: openness beyond the duality of self and other.

samyaksambuddha Superlative for the Buddha.

satipatthana "Setting-up of mindfulness"; the practice of recollection.

Shantideva (c.685-763) Author of the *Bodhicharyavatara* (*Entering the Path of Enlightenment*), a key text which describes the mahayana path of developing the six paramitas.

shunyata "Emptiness." A completely open and unbounded clarity of mind characterized by groundlessness and freedom from all conceptual frameworks. It could be called "openness" since "emptiness" can convey the mistaken notion of a state of voidness or blankness. In fact, shunyata is inseparable from compassion and all other awakened qualities.

tantric From tantra which refers to the root texts of vajrayana Buddhism and to the systems of meditation they describe.

Taranatha Noted Tibetan historian-scholar of the 16th-17th century who wrote a history of Buddhism in India.

tathagatagarbha Buddha nature. The enlightened basic nature of all beings. Tathagata means "thus come" or "thus gone" and is an epithet for the Buddha; and garbha means "womb," or "essence."

yana Path

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